

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000501

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 045 (03/22/04)

Sensitive but unclassified - protect accordingly.

CONTENTS: PRESIDENT'S PARTY ALLEGES BIAS IN ELECTION  
ASSISTANCE

- MORE POLL DATA SHOW PROBLEMS FOR UNP  
- TORHEL PATTERSON

PRESIDENT'S PARTY ALLEGES BIAS IN ELECTION ASSISTANCE  
-----

1. (SBU) FYI. President Kumaratunga's United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) party alleged over the weekend that foreign governments -- including the U.S. -- were trying to influence the outcome of the April 2 parliamentary elections by providing financial assistance to monitoring organizations biased in favor of the UNP. At a UPFA press conference on March 21, UPFA candidate M.M. Zuhair read out a statement saying the UPFA was concerned over financial assistance from foreign countries going to "bodies comprising persons who have strong views on political issues and whose transparency and accountability have not been duly established and whose public postures have shown a bias in favor of the UNP." That statement and others were reproduced in the local press today and given banner headlines in the government-controlled DAILY NEWS, for example. Mission has drafted some "if-asked" press guidance that outlines once again the election assistance that we are providing, underscoring the point that none of it is partisan in any way. (POL)

MORE POLL DATA SHOW PROBLEMS FOR UNP  
-----

2. (U) FYI. More recent poll data indicates problems for the UNP. (As reported in Colombo 477, two polls were released recently showing that the UNP might be in trouble due to adverse voter perceptions of its handling of the economy, among other factors.) Mission has received an advance copy of the second wave of the poll conducted by local think-tank CPA with USAID funding, which was carried out after the March 3 split in the LTTE. One of the key findings is that those polled felt the UPFA was more capable than the UNP to handle most key election-related issues, especially those relating to the economy. On these matters, the gap for the UNP might have lessened a bit, but it was still considerable. The UNP, however, continued to get good marks for its handling of the peace process. (POL)

TORHEL PATTERSON  
-----

3. (U) We've had fun running around town with Torkel Patterson today. He's seen, inter alia, Foreign Minister Fernando, Lakshman Kadirgamar and had breakfast with the Amcham. Dinner tonight with co-chair Ambassadors and a few others before he heads to the airport. (DCM)

LUNSTEAD